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Economic and Social Council

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Statistical Commission
Thirtieth session
1-5 March 1999
Agenda item 15
Report of the Commission on its thirtieth session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: M. D. **Asthana** (India)

Chapter ____

Finance statistics

(Agenda item 3 (d))

1. The Commission considered item 3 (d) of its agenda at its 491st meeting, on 1 March 1999. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/6).

Action taken by the Commission

2. The Commission recognized the concerns of countries about the complexities and high resource-intensiveness of measuring external debt, particularly for short-term liabilities of the corporate sector, and the need to compile and publish components of external debt based on creditor as well as debtor sources for improved data quality and accuracy. In this context, it also took note of ongoing efforts to compare alternative methods of measuring external debt and to enable the advantages and disadvantages of the available methods to be determined.

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Demographic, social and migration statistics

(Agenda item 4)

3. The Commission considered item 4 of its agenda at its 494th meeting, on 3 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Progress report of the Secretary-General on demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9);

(b) Note by the Secretary General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System (E/CN.3/1999/10);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (E/CN.3/1989/11);

(d) Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2 (Provisional ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2).

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Commended the work of the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, expressed its appreciation for the involvement of experts in civil registration and vital statistics from all regions in its review, as well as the United Nations Population Fund and the Pan American Health Organization, and welcomed the publication of the five related handbooks;

(b) Endorsed the provisional principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (Provisional ST/ESA/SER.M/19/Rev.2) with the revisions proposed by the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, as provided in its report (E/CN.3/1999/10, annex);

(c) Took note of the point raised by the representative of France, namely that the concept of vital statistics in French differed from that in English and must be clearly defined in the principles and recommendations;

(d) Requested the Secretariat to publish the principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system as quickly as possible, in all the official languages of the United Nations;

(e) Took note of the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/11, annex);

(f) Requested the Secretariat to resolve the question of the nomenclature related to Palestine contained in the progress report of the Secretary-General on demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9).

Environment statistics

(Agenda item 5)

5. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 494th meeting, on 3 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics (E/CN.3/1999/12);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting (E/CN.3/1999/13).

Action taken by the Commission

6. The Commission:

(a) Approved the work programme of the United Nations Statistics Division in the field of environment statistics;

(b) Approved the suggestion made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its thirty-second session that the Task Force on Environment Statistics be discontinued;

(c) Stressed the need for continued coordination in environment statistics and approved the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities carrying out such coordination to the extent possible;

(d) Welcomed the work of the London Group on Environmental Accounting towards the revision of the system of integrated environmental-economic accounting (SEEA).

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Chapter ____. Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments and to its resolutions

(Agenda item 7)

1. The Commission considered item 7 on the basis of an informal paper prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division (a) summarizing the ministerial communiqué and summary of the President of the Economic and Social Council of the 1998 high-level segment of the Council,[1] the agreed conclusions of the 1998 coordination segment of the Council,[2] and Council resolutions 1998/44 and 1998/46 and decision 1998/290; (b) reviewing the implications for the Statistical Commission; and (c) setting out the relevant actions taken by the Statistical Commission.

Action taken by the Commission

2. The Commission agreed to bring to the attention of the Economic and Social Council the following actions that it had taken consistent with the Council's requests:

(a) The Commission has reviewed its functioning on a number of occasions and introduced improvements, including a review at its thirtieth session, the results of which are set out in detail in chapter ___;

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(b) The Bureau of the Commission has always played a crucial role, particularly through the functioning of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, of which the Bureau comprises the core membership;

(c) For the thirtieth session of the Commission, the Chairman of the twenty-ninth session is serving as a Vice-Chairman to promote continuity, a practice that is expected to continue;

(d) The Bureau of the Commission met with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council during the Commission's thirtieth session at the invitation of the President of the Council to try to find ways to improve their interaction;

(e) The government representatives attending the Commission (both members and non-members of the Commission) are almost always Directors-General of national statistical offices;

(f) The Commission has made its documents concise and issue-oriented and they are largely available in all the official languages of the Commission at the time of Commission sessions;

(g) Issues are referred by the Commission to other functional commissions as appropriate;

(h) The Commission adopts a decision-oriented report on its sessions;

(i) The Commission works within its mandate and cooperates with other functional commissions as needed;

(j) The regional commissions participate fully in the work of the Commission;

(k) The Commission has reviewed and supported the work of the United Nations Statistics Division on indicators, including the draft of the report prepared by the Division, which will be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its informal meeting on indicators in May 1999 (see chapter ___ for details).

3. The Commission expressed its willingness to take up relevant issues that might be referred to it by other functional commissions to ensure a more integrated approach to issues of concern to the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3), chap. IV, para. 5.

[2] Ibid., chap. VI, para. 3.